

# Brave New World?

► By Michael Mountain

**Our work for the animals is a work of the soul.**



“The next few years will be critical to life on earth.”

An unseen super intelligence takes control of Earth ... people wake up and begin to feel guided by a superior force... governments tend to drive things toward peace rather than war ...

Messianic prophecy from the pages of the Bible? Science fiction? No, just some of the latest projections from some of today's top science and technology experts.

Of course, things could go a very different way, too. But, one way or another, they tell us, within the next 30 years or so, we humans are either going to have caused irreparable damage to ourselves, and to the rest of the natural world, or we're going to have ushered in a new and better kind of civilization. Nothing in between.

The reason, they say, that it's going to be one way or the other, rather than anything in between, is the ever-accelerating pace at which change is happening today.

Take one small example from the world of biotechnology. Remember when HIV was identified in the 1980s? It took 15 years for scientists to decode the virus. But when the SARS virus was reported in 2003, it took just 31 days to decode it.

Information technology is growing so fast that we're doubling its power every year. And that's a lot more than it sounds. It means a thousand-fold advance in 10 years, a million-fold in 20 years, and a billion in 30 years.

It also means, for example, that technology is already within striking distance of eliminating disease as we know it, being able to model the human brain, then exceed its capacity, and then exceed it beyond our comprehension. Hence the notion not just of an emerging "artificial intelligence," but

of a "super intelligence." There's even much talk of how the Internet itself - a vast and ever-growing network of brainpower and knowledge - may well "wake up" one day and become that very super intelligence.

One of the buzz words in the world of science today is "the singularity." This refers to a point in time, just a few decades from now, when things will be changing so dramatically and so fast that we can't even imagine what life may be like on the other side of those changes. Scientists say they can predict much of what will lead up to that time... but after that, who knows?

The optimistic view on what is happening is that, by good sense or good fortune, things will work out for the best and we will transition into a Utopian age.

The pessimistic view is that, through our own myopic arrogance and folly, we will use our growing powers to destroy ourselves, succumbing to nuclear terrorism, manmade viruses, the collapse of the environment, and any of a host of other threats.

None of this is science fiction fantasy. For better or worse, it's the world we're creating right now. And none of this is happening *to* us. It's being set in place *by* us.

So, to the extent that the future is in our own hands, how can any of us help drive change in the right direction?

At the very heart of the current revolution is the ability of people of like mind to work together, even though they live thousands of miles apart, and to share information, cooperate, and build together in a way that has never been possible before in history.

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One largely unnoticed grouping of such "people of like mind" is the growing network, all across the world, of those of us who understand that it's time to make peace with each other, with the other animals, and with the natural world of which we humans are simply a small part.

“Kindness recognizes that we're all in this together – all part of something infinitely greater than ourselves.”

These people know, instinctively and deep down, that caring for the animals and nature is important. And, one way or another, they dedicate some part of their lives to doing good for the innocent creatures around us - the dogs and cats, birds and fish, the land, the oceans - however they can.

Every edition of *Best Friends* magazine is a testament to these good people.

In this issue, you'll see them doing all these things:

- Bringing yet more starving and terrified pets out of the hurricane disaster
- Working together to help the "dancing" bears of India
- Campaigning to save dogs from the

cooking pots of China

- Being guardian angels to animals with special needs
- Bringing an end to the killing of homeless pets in shelters
- ... And so much more. The work of Best Friends is driven by the simple philosophy that kindness to animals builds a better world for all of us. Kindness recognizes

that we're all in this together - all part of something infinitely greater than ourselves - and that caring for the other animals, and all of nature, is the best way to care for ourselves, too.

One of the great pleasures of being part of the work of Best Friends is meeting more and more of these good people. You'll find them here at home and all over the world - in every country, culture, background, race, and religion. And, at heart, they all speak the same language: the language of kindness and caring.

We call it the Best Friends Network - a community of like-minded people who can learn together, grow together, and do more and more good things together.

Call it perhaps our own investment in the brave new world that scientists now consider inevitable.

We can't necessarily build the bones of that new world, or its brain.

But as a network of a few million people who care about the animals and nature and each other, we may be able to give it a heart. \*£\*